



# Buzzwords ...

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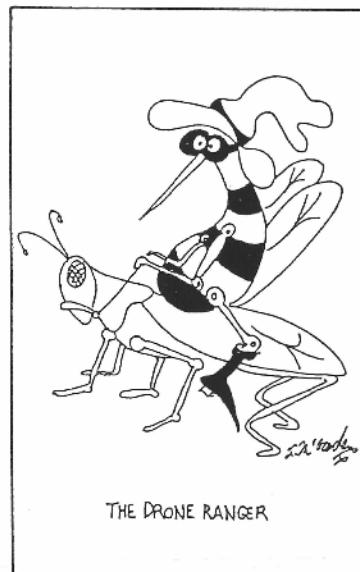
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..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

As most beekeepers are aware, the government has announced that after July 1 the current MAF endemic disease control programme will cease unless funding is provided by our industry. Your national executive has the planning for a disease inspection levy well advanced, but it has decided that a further submission to government is also in order.

The submission will centre on the important unpaid work in the form of legume pollination our industry provides for agriculture and will ask government to take this service into consideration when determining funding for apiary inspection.

The submission, prepared by executive members Keith Herron and Francis Trewby, will be presented to the Under-

Secretary of Agriculture at 4 pm on the 7th of May. If the submission fails, voting papers on the proposed disease control levy will be sent out to all registered beekeepers immediately.

During March and April I have spoken to three branch meetings in the Waikato, Hawkes Bay, and the southern North Island. My assessment of the response I received at these meetings was that MAF services must be retained, but at the best contract price possible. Several beekeepers pointed out that they looked on AFB control programmes in the same way they viewed insurance policies.

Naturally, however, we look forward to Keith and Francis's submission and hope that government believes the beekeeping industry is important enough to our economy to pick up the tab for endemic disease control.

*Dudley Ward, NBA President*

## PRAISE FROM HIGH PLACES

In March your president received a letter from another elected official - the Prime Minister. Mr. Bolger had received the latest edition of the NBA's *Beekeeping - A Profile* and wanted to express his thanks. It turns out the PM has a kiwifruit orchard and has "had a direct experience in the importance of bees to New Zealand's exports." He agrees with our president that "much of what the bee industry does for New Zealand is not fully recognised widely." Great words much appreciated, but unfortunately a cheque to pay for disease inspection services was not attached.

## HONEY : AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND

You may remember in the March issue of *Buzzwords* we highlighted the discussions taking place between Australian and New Zealand officials on the topic of honey imports. We mentioned that Australia had formally requested quarantine conditions for the export of honey to New Zealand and that our rules really don't create a closed door policy on honey importations. Provided that honey can be shown to be free of exotic bee diseases, or has been treated to make it safe, an import permit can't be denied.

The March 15 issue of *Sentinel*, the bulletin of the National Agriculture Security Service, provides further details on the honey import question. According to *Sentinel*, protocols are now being developed to allow reciprocal exports under government certification following heat treatment of honey. The protocols will place emphasis on ensuring that the heat sterilisation process is as foolproof as possible. Each export honey factory will be placed on a MAF Export Conformity Certification Scheme after the factory has demonstrated that it can meet the sterilisation requirements (70°C for 2 hours for chalkbrood; 60°C for 8 hours or 80°C for 1 hour for EFB).

Exporters would have to describe how they process honey in a management systems manual, be audited on factory performance by MAF, and be subject to random product sampling for the presence of viable disease spores. Any infringement would effectively close that factory from exporting until the problems were resolved.

Several questions still remain, however. The unpalatability of heat-treated honey, particularly stronger Australian sources after long treatment times, is likely to adversely affect all domestic honey sales. There is also the problem of honey house certification by the Health Department. If the hygiene requirements Australian producers must meet aren't as stringent as those currently imposed on New Zealanders, that would seem to make a mockery of the whole NZ Health Department scheme. It could also be argued that with the costs of bringing our honey houses up to Health Department requirements, a double standard is created that gives Australian producers an unfair trade advantage.

Finally, the whole issue of drug residues in honey needs to be addressed. The Australians feed tetracycline as a

treatment measure for EFB, while our no-EFB status means we don't feed this drug. Because we don't have tetracycline residues in domestic honey, no one in government has had to face this problem before. But if Australian honey is imported shouldn't we insist on the type of residue testing Japan requires for honey imports from all countries except New Zealand?

NBA Executive

## WANTED: WILD BEES

The Apicultural Research Unit at Ruakura is conducting some very interesting research on AFB spore levels in adult bees. Preliminary results are showing that foulbrood spores can be found on honey bees from hives which show no physical signs of the disease. The unit leader, Dr. Mark Goodwin, now wants to extend this study from "kept" bees to honey bees living in the wild. Mark hopes to get some useful information on how much of a foulbrood threat feral hives really do pose to the beekeeping industry. To do this Mark needs adult bee samples from as many feral hives as possible. And you can help.

Simply collect 30 freshly dead bees from your favourite feral hive, put them into an empty, unbreakable jar (500g p.e.t. honey jars are best) and mail to:

Dr. Mark Goodwin  
Apicultural Research Unit  
MAFTECH  
Ruakura Agricultural Research Centre  
Private Bag  
HAMILTON

Don't forget to include your name, phone number, and location of hive (property owner and road) with the sample.

## U.S. QUEEN PRODUCERS LOSE

The Canadian ban on imports of live bees, begun in 1987 to try to keep out Varroa, has resulted in a NZ\$ 6.8 million annual loss to American bee producers. But as NZ queen producers all know, that hasn't translated directly into big profits for overseas producers. Canadian hive numbers have declined by 25% and there has been a government subsidised increase in Canadian queen rearing and colony overwintering. Canadian queen and nuc suppliers are currently earning some NZ\$ 1.5 million annually. NZ earns about \$600,000 from live bee exports each year.

*American Bee Journal, December 1990*

## BRANCH NEWS

The next meeting of the **Auckland branch** will be held on May 30 at 7:30 pm at the St. Hildas Church Hall, 12 Young Road, Penrose, for the purpose of formulating remits to conference. If you are a subscriber to the *NZ Beekeeper* you are a member and entitled to attend. Postage and photocopying costs make it impossible to notify all non-levy paying members, but arrangements can be made by contacting the branch secretary, phone (09) 238 7464 or by



sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Jim Thompson, 125 Queen Street, PUKEKOHE.

The **Hawkes Bay** branch held a well-attended field day in March where members were able to demonstrate honey harvesting and wintering down. The branch now owns 5 hives. The branch also publishes a great newsletter for members called *Buzz Sheet*. The editor, Jenny Dobson, does a superb job. Their next branch meeting will be Tuesday, May 14 at 7:30pm at the Hawkes Bay Polytechnic, room N532. Proposals for branch remits will be the central topic of discussion.

A follow-up to the **Poverty Bay** branch's successful spring diseaseathon was held April 6-7 in the Gisborne area. Eighteen branch members took part, together with a contingent from the Hawkes Bay branch. At the pre-inspection briefing, NBA executive member Nick Wallingford spoke on the proposed apiary inspection levy. Nick also took part in the diseaseathon and claims he even found some "bug"!

The annual golf tournament between the **Bay of Plenty** and **Waikato** branches is scheduled for Tuesday, July 2 at the Okoroire Hot Springs course. Festivities get underway at noon, with the Bay of Plenty branch looking to avenge last year's loss. Non-golfers from the Waikato branch are urged to attend!

Both the **Wellington** and **Auckland** regions have active domestic (hobbyist) clubs with regular "how to" meetings and well-written, informative newsletters. These clubs are an excellent way to learn more about beekeeping while at the same time meeting others with an interest in bees. If you want to find out more about these clubs contact:

<b>Auckland</b>	<b>Wellington</b>
Franklin Beekeepers Club	Wellington Beekeepers Assn.
Merv Litchfield, secretary	19 Wilfred Street
Waiau Pa Rd., RD 4	TAWA
PUKEKOHE	
ph 23622	

## HONEY REMOVAL - HOW OFTEN?

In the early 80's, researchers in the United States showed that the presence of empty comb stimulated bees to produce more honey. Progressive beekeepers took that to mean that they should extract their supers several times during the season, rather than taking the honey off just once.

Now scientists at the Beaverlodge research station in Canada have found that frequent honey removal does not, in fact, increase honey production. They found that when four colonies were disturbed as a result of honey removal on six occasions, the colonies produced 3.8kg less honey than those not disturbed. Empty comb space may stimulate honey gathering, but this can be offset, according to the research, if honey is removed from the hive too many times during the season.

*American Bee Journal, December 1990*

## CONFERENCE NEWS

The latest word from the Conference organisers is that several beekeepers have already managed to secure an extended holiday at the reduced conference rate from the Blenheim Country Lodge. If you would like to stay on after conference, be sure to organise it with the hotel as soon as possible.

Another reminder is that the cost of the patchwork quilting workshop is all-inclusive. All materials and tuition are covered by the \$30 fee.

The organisers will be arranging courtesy cars as required to meet beekeepers arriving at the airport. A shuttle bus is available at the terminal in Picton for those arriving by ferry.

Please assist the Marlborough branch by registering early.

## NATIONAL BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Please register me/us for the following activities -

Full name and address (give all if party booking)

## REGISTRATION FORM - CONFERENCE 1991

Activity	Inc GST	Number	Total
Conference registration fee	\$15.00	\$	
Seminar Registration	\$25.00	\$	
Dinner/dance (single)	\$56.00	\$	
Wine Trail Tour	\$27.00	\$	
Patchwork Quilting	\$30.00	\$	

I enclose payment in full of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Please send further information on:

Note closing date is 4 June 1991. Forward to:

**Conference Convener**  
**P O Box 307**  
**Blenheim**

## WORLD HONEY PRICE SET TO RISE

Could the pig finally be through the python? That's the question world honey buyers are asking now that stocks have been reduced in the US honey mountain. The buy-back programme, which saw much of that US honey put back on the market several years ago, seems to have done the trick, and that, coupled with a lower than expected US crop, has lead to increased prices in the US. It's unclear how this will affect world prices, but Canadian honey imports to the US have tripled and much of their subsidised surplus has also been reduced.

But if you think beekeepers in the US are finally getting the free market message, think again. They're now griping that the new buy-back price for honey (which they had already sold the government previously) has been set too high! The old price represented a government subsidy of NZ\$ .58/kg, while the new price gives the beekeeper a free NZ\$ .36/kg.

The US federal government has responded to the complaints by stating that they aren't in the business of subsidising beekeepers, they're just there to help orderly honey marketing and promote market stability. So now we know.

*American Bee Journal, December 1990  
Gleanings in Bee Culture, January 1991*



## BORDER PROTECTION PROJECT

MAF's Border Protection Service has set up an awareness campaign designed to educate travellers about restricted goods. They are being told to leave these goods behind, or declare them, to avoid putting New Zealand's agricultural security at risk. A survey by AGB McNair shows that 60 per cent of New Zealand travellers know little or nothing about products containing harmful pests or diseases. Sixty-nine percent of those surveyed believed that it is illegal to bring restricted goods into the country. In fact it is only illegal when the goods are undeclared.

MAF has prepared explanatory leaflets which are now included in travellers's ticket wallets. Airport signage, advertising posters, and in-flight videos are also part of MAF's "Leave It Behind" campaign.

UTA, Continental, Singapore and Cathay Pacific airlines have all confirmed that they will use a new four minute video. The video's main message is "Declare it for New Zealand", urging passengers to use the airport amnesty bins and declare any customs or agricultural goods they are not sure about.

## ROBOT BEE

It had to happen. Scientists in West Germany and Denmark have finally perfected an artifical bee. But don't worry about the beekeeping industry being made redundant. The bee was designed for a single purpose - to try to prove once and for all that the bee dance really is a communication system for honey bees.

Ever since Karl von Frisch won his Nobel Prize for "discovering" the bee dance, scientists have argued about whether it really played a role in directing foragers to nectar sources. Some scientists have maintained that bees are too basic an animal to communicate such things as direction and distance. These scientists contend that honey bees find nectar sources through smell, both in the nectar they receive from returning foragers in the hive, and through marker pheromones deposited on the flowers by the foragers themselves.

While these communication sources undoubtedly also play a role, the robot bee was designed to determine whether the dance alone was also a communication device. The robot bee was cast from bronze and had wings cut from razor blades. The bee's movement was controlled by wires and a tube attached to its mouth even proffered sugar water at the right time.

The scientists put the robot through its paces for the first time in 1988. After being inserted into a hive, the robot bee danced out directions to a feeder station, and sure enough, some of the bee audience promptly flew off to the designated area. The robot bee didn't recruit as many bees as a real dancer does, but the scientists hope to create a second-generation robot that will perform even better.

The robot bee also provided an important new breakthrough. The robot wasn't able to recruit bees when its wings weren't beating. This confirmed what many scientists had always thought, namely that bees follow a dancer's movements in the darkness of the hive by "listening" to changes in the volume of the dancer's buzzing. A scientist described the buzzing at close range as sounding like "a very loud discotheque".

*Scientific American, June 1989*

## BUZZWORDS IS ...

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The views expressed in *Buzzwords* are not necessarily those of the National Beekeepers' Association nor of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

